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III.14 THE POEM OF THE RIGHTEOUS SUFFERER 1996

The Poem of the Righteous Sufferer is a poetic monologue, opening and concluding with hymns, that tells how a certain noble gentleman, once important and prosperous, for no apparent reason was driven to disgrace and disease by the god Marduk. His story is set forth as exemplary of the two sides to divine character, anger and forgiveness, and as exemplary of the unfathomable will of the gods.

The poem opens with a hymn setting forth contrasts of Marduk's nature and then proceeds to the narrative (Tablet I line 41). The speaker loses his luck and his personal defenses are lowered, exposing him to misfortune. He consults experts (line 52), to no avail. He loses favor at court (line 55) and paints a vivid picture of seven base conspirators excitedly clamoring over the advantages they plan to take of his downfall (lines 59-64). Physical disintegration sets in (lines 70ff.), followed by social ostracism. He is reviled everywhere and suffers financial setbacks (lines 99ff.). He loses his post and a long period of depression and foreboding ensues (lines 103ff.). He still hopes for deliverance (lines 119-120).

As Tablet II opens, a year has elapsed. Prayer and consultation are to no avail. One would think he was godless (Tablet II lines 12-22), but he was always scrupulous in his observances of god and sovereign. Does that matter (lines 33ff.)? Can anyone hope to understand the will of the gods? People's fortunes rise and fall — what is the lesson in that?

The speaker has no further opportunity for reflection as he comes down with a textbook of illnesses (Tablet II lines 50ff.). Pains, agony, malfunction, disability crush him. He can neither eat nor drink (Tablet II lines 86ff.). He falls bedridden (Tablet II lines 95ff.) and writhes helplessly in filth and torment. Continued consultations with experts yield nothing. He is given up for lost, his tomb is made ready, grave goods set out, his wretched obituary written (Tablet II lines 114ff.). Gloom settles over his loved ones.

As he lapses into the coma of death, the sufferer, whose name is now revealed to be Shubshi-meshre-Shakkan,¹ sees a dream visitant: a young man in fine clothes (perhaps a personification of the speaker's own self in better days?). The apparition promises him relief and dries up his sores. The ministrant speaks on behalf of a lady, who, as Bottéro has suggested (see below, Literature), may be

1. A high official of the reign of the Kassite king Nazi-Maruttash (early thirteenth century B.C.) is known to have borne this name; he may be identical with the author of the poem (Gurney, RA 80 [1986], 190; von Soden, TUAT III/1, 111; Dalley, BiOr 52 [1995], 85).

Sarpanitum, Marduk's wife (see Tablet IV Fragment C, lines 10'-11'). She may have interceded with her husband on behalf of the sufferer, a common motif in Mesopotamian literature (compare *Against Enlil's Anger* [III.38c] line 8'). In Tablet III lines 16-18 the sufferer tries vainly to convince his skeptical family of the truth of what he saw. In a second vision, a man washes him off with water and massages him. In a third, a female figure intercedes for him in oblique terms; thereupon a scholar appears with a written text that contains the wording for his release (Tablet III line 41). Signs are sent so the people will believe; Marduk forgives him his misdeeds. The sufferer's illnesses are thereupon cured, he begins to eat and drink, gets out of bed, and testifies to his health.

Tablet IV opens with Shubshi-meshre-Shakkan's testimony that it was Marduk who saved him. He goes through a river ordeal to prove himself guiltless, then goes to the temple of Marduk. His progress through the city echoes the note of encouragement for the human race sounded by the name of each gate and quarter and fulfills the implications of the names. In Tablet IV lines 51ff. he makes lavish thank offerings; finally, in Tablet IV Fragment C lines 3'ff., he gives a banquet for the citizenry at the site of his intended entombment. In a closing hymn, the Babylonians proclaim the wondrous healing power of Marduk to rescue mankind. So great is this healing power that it can heal even the most terrible of afflictions — those sent by Marduk himself.

The language of the poem is rich in rare words. The author was steeped in the scholarly lore of his age, including medical texts; some of the pathological terms used are otherwise attested only in diagnostic treatises. The author makes use of every poetic device in the Akkadian repertory. He is fond of wordplays, alliteration, rhyme, intricate parallelism, inclusion by opposites. He develops various elaborate over-arching symbolic frames of reference in his text, among them darkness and light, day and night.¹ He displays his humility throughout his text by various ingenious devices.² An ancient commentary and numerous manuscripts from different localities attest to the esteem this composition enjoyed among the educated.

The text sets forth a Mesopotamian notion of guilt and divine power. The modern term "righteous sufferer" is a misnomer when applied to this and comparable texts; at least, Shubshi-meshre-Shakkan was not so confident of his righteousness as Job. The author of Job makes clear that Job's suffering had

1. Moran, *JAOS* 103 (1983), 257-258; in general, see W. von Soden, "Licht und Finsternis in der sumerischen und babylonisch-assyrischen Religion," *Studium Generale* 13 (1960), 647-653.

2. B. Foster, "Self-Reference of an Akkadian Poet," *JAOS* 103 (1983), 123-130.

nothing to do with his righteousness, but was a test of faith. Here the speaker says that, so far as he knows, he has been righteous, and whatever his fault may have been (who can know?), he is sorry for it and begs forgiveness. There is none of the defiance and bitterness of Job. In short, this text sees suffering and redemption as signs of divine power, while Job sees them as tests of human strength. Despite these differences, the two documents belong to a common Near Eastern literary tradition. Each works out its version of the problem of divinely inflicted human suffering in an original manner.

The reader is left to conclude that Marduk can redeem anyone, no matter how lost to the human race. This sounds a note of optimism that for the author outweighs his despair and agnosticism. In expatiating this theme, the poet drew freely on a vast store of knowledge to lend his text richness and broad scholarly appeal. The product is one of the finest literary monuments of Mesopotamian antiquity.

Tablet I

- I will praise the lord of wisdom, solicitous god, (1)
 Furious in the night, growing calm in the day:
 Marduk! lord of wisdom, solicitous god,
 Furious in the night, growing calm in the day:
 Whose anger is like a raging tempest, a desolation, (5)
 But whose breeze is sweet as the breath of morn.
 In his fury not to be withstood, his rage the deluge,
 Merciful in his feelings, his emotions relenting.
 The skies cannot sustain the weight of his hand,
 His gentle palm rescues the moribund. (10)
 Marduk! The skies cannot sustain the weight of his hand,
 His gentle palm rescues the moribund.
 He it is, in the brunt of whose anger, graves are dug,
 At the same moment, raised the fallen from disaster.
 He glowers, protective spirits take flight, (15)
 He regards, the one whose god forsook him returns.
 His severe punishment is harsh and speedy,
 He stops short and quickly returns to his natural state.

He is bull-headed when cherishing his beloved(?),¹
 Like a cow with a calf,
 he keeps turning around watchfully.² (20)
 His scourge is barbed and punctures the body,
 His bandages are soothing, they heal the doomed.
 He speaks and makes one incur many sins,
 On the day of his justice liability and guilt are dispelled.
 He is the one who afflicts with demons of shaking-disease, (25)
 Through his sacral spell chills and shivering are driven away.
 Who ... the flood of Adad, the blow of Erra,
 Who reconciles the wrathful god and [god]dess,
 The lord divines the gods' inmost thoughts,
 (But) no [god] understands his behavior! (30)
 Marduk divines the gods' inmost thoughts,
 Which [god] understands his mind?
 As heavy his hand, so compassionate his heart,
 As brutal his weapons, so life-sustaining his feelings.
 Without his consent, who could cure his blow? (35)
 Against his will, which one could stay his hand?
 I, who touched bottom like a fish,³
 will proclaim his anger,
 He quickly granted me favor, as if reviving the dead.
 I will teach the people that his kindness is nigh,
 May his favorable thought take away their [guilt?]. (40)
 From the day the Lord punished me,
 And the warrior Marduk became furious with me,
 My own god threw me over and disappeared,
 My goddess broke rank and vanished.
 He cut off the benevolent angel who (walked) beside me, (45)
 My protecting spirit was frightened off,
 to seek out someone else.
 My vigor was taken away,
 my manly appearance became gloomy,

1. A wordplay on "beloved"(?) and "wild bull" may be intended, resumed by "cow" in the following line. Variant: "love for me"(?).

2. Variant: "towards me."

3. Text: "ate mud" (perhaps like English "bit the dirt").

My dignity escaped¹ and lit on the roof.
 Terrifying signs beset me:
 I was forced from my house, I wandered outside. (50)
 My omens were confused,
 they were contradictory every day,
 (Even) with diviner and dream interpreter
 my course was undecided.
 What was said in the street portended ill for me,
 When I lay down at night, my dream was terrifying.
 The king, incarnation of the gods, sun of his peoples, (55)
 His heart hardened against me,
 turning tolerance to ill-will.
 Courtiers were plotting hostile action against me,
 They mustered themselves to instigate base deeds:
 If the first "I will make him end his life"
 Says the second "I ousted (him) from his command!" (60)
 So likewise the third "I will get my hands on his post!"
 "I'll come into property!" vows the fourth
 As the fifth subverts the mind of fifty,*
 Sixth and seventh follow on his heels!²
 The clique of seven have massed their forces, (65)
 Merciless as fiends, the likeness of demons.
 So one is their body, (but seven) their mouths.
 Their hearts fulminate against me, ablaze like fire.
 Slander and lies they try to lend credence against me.
 My eloquent mouth they checked, as with reins, (70)
 My lips, which used to discourse,
 became those of a deaf man.
 My resounding call struck dumb,
 My proud head bent earthward,
 My stout heart turned feeble for terror,
 My broad breast brushed aside by a stripling, (75)
 My far-reaching arms were pinned by my clothing.
 I, who walked proudly, learned slinking,

1. Variant: "flew off."

2. Literally: "like his protective spirit."

I, so grand, became servile.
 To my vast family I became a loner,
 As I went through the streets, I was pointed at, (80)
 I would enter the palace, eyes would squint at me,
 My city was glowering at me like an enemy,
 Belligerent and hostile would seem my land!
 My brother became my foe,
 My friend became a malignant demon, (85)
 My comrade would denounce me savagely,
 My colleague kept the taint to(?) his weapons for bloodshed,
 My best friend made my life an aspersion.
 My slave cursed me openly in the assembly (of gentlefolk),
 My slave girl defamed me before the rabble. (90)
 An acquaintance would see me and make himself scarce,
 My family set me down as an outsider.
 A pit awaited anyone speaking well of me,
 While he who was uttering defamation of me forged ahead.
 One who relayed base things about me
 had a god for his help, (95)
 For the one who said "What a pity about him!"
 death came early,
 The one of no help, his life became charmed,
 I had no one to go at my side, nor saw I a champion.
 They parceled my possessions among the riffraff,
 The sources of my watercourses they blocked with muck, (100)
 They chased the harvest song from my fields,
 They left my community deathly still,
 like that of a (ravaged) foe.
 They let another assume my duties,
 They appointed an outsider to my prerogatives.
 By day sighing, by night lamentation, (105)
 Monthly, depression, despair the year.
 I moaned like a dove all my days,
 Like a singer, I moan out my dirge.*
 My eyes endure(?) constant crying,
 My cheeks scald from tears, as if eroded(?). (110)
 My face is darkened from the apprehensions of my heart,

Terror and panic have jaundiced my face.
 The wellsprings of my heart quaked in unremitting anxiety,
 I was changeable(?) as a flickering fire,
 Prayer was disorder, like an exploding flame, (115)
 My entreaty was like the fracas of a brawl.
 My sweet-lipped discourse was murky, obscure,
 When I turned a biting comment, my gambit was stifled.
 "Surely in daylight good will come upon me!
 "The new moon will appear, my sun will shine!" (120)

Tablet II

One whole year to the next! The appointed time passed.¹ (1)
 As I turned around, it was more and more terrible.
 My ill luck was on the increase, I could find no good fortune.
 I called to my god, he did not show his face,
 I prayed to my goddess, she did not raise her head. (5)
 The diviner with his inspection
 did not get to the bottom of it,
 Nor did the dream interpreter with his incense
 clear up my case,
 I beseeched a dream spirit, but it did not enlighten me,
 The exorcist with his ritual did not appease divine wrath.
 What bizarre actions everywhere! (10)
 I looked behind: persecution, harrassment!
 Like one who had not made libations to his god,
 Nor invoked his goddess with a food offering,
 Who was not wont to prostrate, nor seen to bow down,
 From whose mouth supplication and prayer were wanting, (15)
 Who skipped holy days, despised festivals,
 Who was neglectful, omitted the gods' rites,
 Who had not taught his people reverence and worship,
 Who did not invoke his god, but ate his food offering,
 Who snubbed his goddess, brought (her) no flour offering, (20)

1. Variant: "My." The sufferer evidently projected a fixed limit to his misfortunes, perhaps by divination.

Like one possessed(?), who forgot his lord,
 Who casually swore a solemn oath by his god:
 I, indeed, seemed (such a one)!
 I, for my part, was mindful of supplication and prayer,
 Prayer to me was the natural recourse, sacrifice my rule.
 The day for reverencing the gods
 was a source of satisfaction to me, (25)
 The goddess's procession day was my profit and return.
 Praying for the king, that was my joy,
 His sennet was as if for (my own) good omen.
 I instructed my land to observe the god's rites,
 The goddess's name did I drill my people to esteem. (30)
 I made my praises of the king like a god's,
 And taught the populace reverence for the palace.
 I wish I knew that these things were pleasing to a god!
 What seems good to one's self could be an offense to a god,
 What in one's own heart seems abominable
 could be good to one's god! (35)
 Who could learn the reasoning of the gods in heaven?
 Who could grasp the intentions of the gods of the depths?
 Where might human beings have learned the way of a god?
 He who lived by (his) brawn died in confinement.
 Suddenly one is downcast, in a trice full of cheer, (40)
 One moment he sings in exaltation,
 In a trice he groans like a professional mourner.
 People's motivations change in a twinkling!
 Starving, they become like corpses,
 Full, they would rival their gods. (45)
 In good times, they speak of scaling heaven,
 When it goes badly, they complain of going down to hell.
 I have ponde[red]* these things;
 I have made no sense of them.
 But as for me, in despair, a whirlwind is driving(?) me!
 Debilitating disease is let loose upon me: (50)
 An evil vapor has blown against me
 [from the] ends of the earth,
 Head pain has surged up upon me from the breast of hell,

A malignant spectre has come forth from its hidden depth,
 A relentless [ghost] came out of its dwelling place.
 [A she-demon came] down from the mountain, (55)
 Ague set forth [with the] flood [and sea?],
 Debility broke through the ground with the plants.
 [They assembled] their host, together they came upon me:
 [They struck my he]ad, they closed around my pate,
 [My features] were gloomy, my eyes ran a flood, (60)
 They wrenched my muscles, made my neck limp,
 They thwacked [my chest], pounded(?) my breast,
 They affected my flesh, threw (me) into convulsions,
 They kindled a fire in my epigastrium,
 They churned up my bowels, they tw[isted] my entrails(?), (65)
 Coughing and hacking* infected my lungs,
 They infected(?) my limbs, made my flesh pasty,
 My lofty stature they toppled like a wall,
 My robust figure they flattened like a bulrush,
 I was dropped like a dried fig, I was tossed on my face. (70)
 A demon has clothed himself in my body for a garment,
 Drowsiness smothers me like a net,
 My eyes stare, they cannot see,
 My ears strain, they cannot hear.
 Numbness has spread over my whole body, (75)
 Paralysis has fallen upon my flesh.
 Stiffness has seized my arms,
 Debility has fallen upon my loins,
 My feet forgot how to move.
 [A stroke] has overcome me, I choke like one fallen, (80)
 Signs of death* have shrouded my face!
 [If someone th]inks of me, I can't respond to the inquirer,
 "[Ala]s!" they weep, I have lost consciousness.
 A snare is laid on my mouth,
 And a bolt bars my lips. (85)
 My way in is barred, my point of slaking blocked,
 My hunger is chronic, my gullet constricted.
 If it be of grain, I choke it down like stinkweed,
 Beer, the sustenance of mankind, is sickening to me.

- Indeed, the malady drags on! (90)
 For lack of food my features are unrecognizable,
 My flesh is waste, my blood has run dry,
 My bones are loose, covered (only) with skin,
 My tissues are inflamed, afflicted with gangrene(?).
 I took to bed, confined, going out was exhaustion, (95)
 My house turned into my prison.
 My flesh was a shackle, my arms being useless,
 My person was a fetter, my feet having given way.
 My afflictions were grievous, the blow was severe!
 A scourge full of barbs thrashed me, (100)
 A crop lacerated me, cruel with thorns.
 All day long tormentor would torment [me],
 Nor at night would he let me breathe freely a moment.
 From writhing, my joints were separated,
 My limbs were splayed and thrust apart. (105)
 I spent the night in my dung like an ox,
 I wallowed in my excrement like a sheep.
 The exorcist recoiled from my symptoms,
 While my omens have perplexed the diviner.
 The exorcist did not clarify the nature of my complaint, (110)
 While the diviner put no time limit on my illness.
 No god came to the rescue, nor lent me a hand,
 No goddess took pity on me, nor went at my side.
 My grave was open, my funerary goods ready,
 Before I had died, lamentation for me was done. (115)
 All my country said, "How wretched he was!"
 When my ill-wisher heard, his face lit up,
 When the tidings reached her, my ill-wisher,
 her mood became radiant.
 The day grew dim for my whole family,
 For those who knew me, their sun grew dark.* (120)

Tablet III

Heavy was his hand upon me, I could not bear it! (1)
 Dread of him was oppressive, it [me].
 His fierce [pun]ishment* [], the deluge,
 His stride was ..., it ... []
 [Ha]rsh, severe illness does not ... [] my person, (5)
 I lost sight of [aler]tness,* [] make my mind stray.
 I gro[an] day and night alike,
 Dreaming and waking [I am] equally wretched.
 A remarkable young man of extraordinary physique,
 Magnificent in body, clothed in new garments, (10)
 Because I was only half awake,* his features lacked form.
 He was clad in splendor, robed in dread —
 He came in upon me, he stood over me.
 [When I saw him, my] flesh grew numb.
 [] "The Lady(?) has sent [me], (15)
 "[]".
 [] I tried to tell [my people],¹
 "[] sent [] for me."
 They were silent and did not [speak],
 They heard me [in silence and did not answer]. (20)
 A second time [I saw a dream].
 In the dream I saw [at night],
 A remarkable purifier [],
 Holding in his hand a tamarisk rod of purification,
 "Laluralimma,² resident of Nippur, (25)
 "Has sent me to cleanse you."
 He was carrying water, he po[ured it] over me,
 He pronounced the resuscitating incantation,
 he massaged [my] bo[dy].
 A third time I saw a dream.
 In my dream I saw at night: (30)

1. These three lines may mean that when the sufferer told of his dream to his family, no one believed him. For the restoration, see line 47 below, where they need a sign to be convinced.

2. An academic Sumerian name, typical of Babylonia of the second half of the second millennium B.C. Compare *Why Do You Curse Me?* (IV.24).

A remarkable young woman of shining countenance,
 Clothed like a person(?), being li[ke] a god,
 A queen among peoples [],
 She entered upon me and [sat down] ... []
 She ordered my deliverance []
 "Fear not!" she said, "I [will] (35)
 "Whatever one sees(?) of a dream []."
 She ordered my deliverance, "Most wre[tched] indeed is he,
 "Whoever he might be, the one who saw the vision at night."¹
 In the dream (was) Ur-Nintinugga, a Babylonian(?) ...
 A bearded young man wearing a tiara, (40)
 He was an exorcist, carrying a tablet,
 "Marduk has sent me!
 "To Shubshi-meshre-Sakkan² I have brought a sw[athe],
 "From his pure hands I have brought a sw[athe]."
 He has entru[sted] me into the hands of my ministrant. (45)
 [In] waking hours he sent a message,
 He reve[aled] his favorable sign to my people.
 I was awake in my sickness, a (healing) serpent slithered by.^{3*}
 My illness was quickly over, [my fetters] were broken.
 After my lord's heart had quiet[ed], (50)
 (And) the feelings of merciful Marduk were ap[peased],
 [And he had] accepted my prayers [],
 His sweet {relen}ting [],
 {He ordered] my deliverance: "He is g[reatly trie]d!"
 [] to extol [] (55)
 [] to worship and []
 [] my guilt []
 [] my iniquity []
 [] my transgression []

1. These are oblique references to the sufferer, perhaps meaning something like "whoever has seen this vision should have pity taken upon him."

2. The name of the sufferer. This time the object of mercy is more specific than the preceding. Note that Marduk is named here for the first time since the opening of the poem.

3. The serpent, like the serpents of Aesculapius, was sometimes associated with the goddess of healing; see D. McDonald, "The Serpent as Healer: Theriac and Ancient Near Eastern Pottery," *Source* 13/4 (1994), 21-27.

He made the wind bear away my offenses.

(60)

(The exact placement of the following lines is unknown.)

[He applied] to me his spell

which binds [debilitating disease],¹

[He drove] back the evil vapor to the ends of the earth,

He bore off [the head pain] to the breast of hell,

(5')

[He sent] down the malignant spectre to its hidden depth,

The relentless ghost he returned [to] its dwelling place,

He overthrew the she-demon, sending it off to the mountain,

He replaced the ague in flood and sea.

He eradicated debility like a plant,

(10')

Uneasy sleep, excessive drowsiness,

He dissipated like smoke filling the sky.

The turning towards people(?) with "Woe!" and "Alas!"*

he drove away like a cloud, earth ... []

The tenacious disease in the head,

which was [heavy] as a [mill]stone,

He raised like dew of night, he removed it from me.

(15')

My beclouded eyes,

which were wrapped in the shroud of death,

He drove (the cloud) a thousand leagues away,

he brightened [my] vision.

My ears, which were stopped

and clogged like a deaf man's,

He removed their blockage, he opened my hearing.

My nose, whose breathing was choked

by symptoms of fever,

(20')

He soothed its affliction so I could breathe [freely].

My babbling lips, which had taken on a hard crust?,

He wiped away their distress(?)

and und[id] their deformation.

My mouth, which was muffled,

so that proper speech was diffi[cult],

He scoured like copper and r[emoved] its filth.

(25')

1. See Tablet II lines 50ff.

My teeth, which were clenched
 and locked together firmly,
 [He op]ened their fastening, fre[ed?] the jaws(?).^{*}
 My tongue, which was tied and [could] not converse,
 [He] wiped off its coating and [its] speech became fluent(?).
 My windpipe, which was tight and choking,
 as though on a gobbet, (30')
 He made well and let it si[ng] its songs like a flute.
 My [gul]let, which was swollen so it could not take [food],
 its swelling went down and he opened its blockage.
 My [], which []
 [] above [] (35')
 [which] was darkened like []

(three damaged lines, then gap)

(The following lines are known only from the ancient commentary, but must go in the gap here, in sequence but not necessarily seriatim.)

- a. My intestine, which was ever empty for want,
 and was coiled (tight) like basketry,
- b. Accepts nourishment, holds drink.
- c. My neck, which was limp and twisted at the base,
- d. He shored up,^{*} a hillock,¹ he planted upright like a tree(?).
- e. He made my body that of a perfect athlete.²
- f. He pared my nails as if to drive out a "vengeance."³
- g. He drove out their illness and made their upper parts well.
- h. My knees, which were tied and b[ound] like a ... bird's
- i. The shape of my bo[d]y [he made] remarkable(?)
- j. He wiped off the grime, he cleansed its filth
- k. My gloomy mien began to glow (=120?)*

1. The image may be of piling up around the bottom of something to make it strong (differently CAD A/2, 1b).

2. Literally: "perfect in strength."

3. Obscure word (*naqqimtu*). The frame of reference may be witchcraft and countermeasures; one pares the nails well lest "vengeance" (= black magic?) come to fester under them to assault the body? "Vengeance" is either male or female (as here). See also III.31 line 77.

Tablet IV¹

(Fragment A)

The Lord [] me, (1')
 The Lord took hold of me,
 The Lord set me on my feet,
 The Lord revived me,
 He rescued me [from the p]it, (5')
 He summoned me [from destruc]tion,
 [] he pulled me from the river of death.
 [] he took my hand.
 [He who] smote me,
 Marduk, he restored me! (10')
 He smote the hand of my smiter,
 It was Marduk who made him drop his weapon.
 [He] the attack of my foe,
 It was Marduk who []

(Two fragmentary lines, then gap. Insert here, perhaps, two lines known only from the ancient commentary.)

- l. At the place of the river ordeal,
 where people's fates are decided,
 m. I was struck on the forehead, my slavemark removed.

(Fragment B)

[] which in my prayers []
 [With] prostration and supplication [] to Esagila []
 [I who went] down to the grave
 have returned to the "Gate of [Sunrise]."2

1. The assignment of texts to this tablet remains uncertain. Various arrangements have been proposed by Lambert, BWL, 24-25; OrNS 57 (1988), 88; Borger, JCS 18 (1964), 51; von Soden, MDOG 94 (1979), 51 note 5; Vogelzang, RA 73 (1979), 180; Reiner, *Poetry*, 128. Von Soden and Reiner place Fragment A at the end rather than the beginning of the tablet (Fragment A = Lambert, BWL, 1-15; Fragment B = Lambert, BWL, 76-101; Fragment C = Lambert, BWL, 124-30).

2. This and the following are gates of the Marduk temple complex in Babylon (Goetze, *Topographical Texts*, 90).

[In the] "Gate of Prosperity" prosperity was [given me].

[In the] "Gateway of the Guardian Spirit"

a guardian spirit [drew nigh to me].

(40')

[In the] "Gate of Well-being" I beheld well-being.

In the "Gate of Life" I was granted life.

In the "Gate of Sunrise" I was reckoned among the living.

In the "Gate of Splendid Wonderment"

my signs were plain to see.

In the "Gate of Release from Guilt"

I was released from my bond.

(45')

In the "Gate of Praise" (?) my mouth made inquiry.

In the "Gate of Release from Sighing"

my sighs were released.

In the "Gate of Pure Water"

I was sprinkled with purifying water.

In the "Gate of Conciliation" I appeared with Marduk,

In the "Gate of Joy" I kissed the foot* of Sarpanitum.

(50')

I was assiduous in supplication and prayer before them,

I placed fragrant incense before them,

An offering, a gift, sundry donations I presented,

Many fatted oxen I slaughtered, butchered many ...,

Honey-sweet beer and pure wine I repeatedly libated.

(55')

The protecting genius, the guardian spirit,

divine attendants of the fabric of Esagila,

I made their feelings glow with libation,

I made them exultant [with] lavish [meals].

[To the threshold, the bolt] socket, the bolt, the doors

[I offered] oil, butterfat, and choicest grain.

(60')

[] the rites of the temple.

(large gap)

(insert here?)

o. I proceeded along Kunush-kadru Street

in a state of redemption.

p. He who has done wrong by Esagil,

let him learn from me.

- q. It was Marduk who put a muzzle on the mouth
of the lion that was devouring me.
- r. Marduk took away the sling of my pursuer
and deflected his slingstone.

(Fragment C)

[] golden grain [] (1')

[He?] anointed himself with sweet cedar perfume,
upon him []¹

A feast for the Babylonian(s?) []

His tomb he(?) had made [was set up] for a feast!

The Babylonians saw how [Marduk] can restore to life, (5')

And all mouths proclaimed [his] greatness,
"Who (would have) said he would see his sun?
"Who (would have) imagined
that he would pass through his street?
"Who but Marduk revived him as he was dying?
"Besides Sarpanitum,
which goddess bestowed his breath of life? (10')

"Marduk can restore to life from the grave,
"Sarpanitum knows how to rescue from annihilation.
"Wherever earth is founded, heavens are stretched wide,
"Wherever sun shines, fire blazes,
"Wherever water runs, wind blows, (15')

"Those whose bits of clay Aruru pinched off (to form them),
"Those endowed with life, who walk upright,
"[Tee]ming mankind, as many as they be,
give praise to Marduk!

"[] those who can speak,
"[] may he rule all the peoples (20')

"[] shepherd of all habi[tations]
"[] floods from the deep
"[] the gods []

1. Unlike other translators, I read these lines throughout in the third person (*elišu/bīt geberišu*, *ēpušu* = Assyrianism?). This distancing is the result of attention now focusing on the Babylonians' view of the sufferer and culminates in the Babylonians singing a hymn of praise to Marduk.

"[] the extent of heaven and netherworld,
 "[]
 "[] was getting darker and darker for him."* (25')

Text: (Tablet I) W. G. Lambert, BWL pl. 1-4, 74; Ebeling-Köcher-Rost, LKA 24; Leichty, *Studies Finkelstein*, 145; Wiseman, *AnSt* 30 (1980), 102-104; Sippar ms. (Al-Rawi and George, unpublished). (Tablet II) Lambert, BWL, pl. 4-11, 74. (Tablet III) Lambert, BWL, pl. 12-13, 74. (Tablet IV) Lambert, BWL, pl. 18. Source u = 1-15; t = 36-61, 94-116; w = 101-112; v = 107-120. See also Gurney, OECT 11 48 (not used). (Commentary) Lambert, BWL, pl. 15-17.

Edition: Lambert, BWL, 21-62, 343-345; Al-Rawi and George, unpublished (Tablet I).

Translation: Biggs, ANET³, 596-600; Labat, *Religions*, 328-341; Bottéro, *Recherches et Documents du Centre Thomas More, Document 77/7*, 11-24; von Soden, TUAT III/1, 110-135 (with new readings and interpretations adopted here).

Literature: (in general) W. von Soden, "Das Fragen nach der Gerechtigkeit Gottes im alten Orient," MDOG 96 (1965), 41-59; J. Bottéro, "Le Problème du Mal en Mésopotamie ancienne, Prologue à une Étude du 'Juste Souffrant'," *Recherches et Documents du Centre Thomas More, Document 77/7* (1977), 1-43. (To specific aspects of the poem) Foster, JAOS 103 (1983), 123-130; Moran, JAOS 103 (1983), 255-260 (with proposals for the opening of Tablet I adopted here); Groneberg, JAOS 107 (1987), 323-324 (to opening of Tablet I); Vogelzang, RA 73 (1979), 180 (basic arrangement of Tablet IV adopted here); Reiner, *Poetry*, 101-118 (translation and literary study of Tablet II, to which I owe insights); Borger, HKL 1, 266; HKL 2, 159.

**Notes to Text:* Tablet I has been re-edited by Al-Rawi and George, "Tablets from the Sippar Library IV," (unpublished) to which I owe numerous new readings, corrections, and additions, notably to lines 5, 12-19, 26, 35-42, 87-88, 107-120, and where reference to earlier literature is found. I 63 is read from an unpublished fragment kindly communicated by George. For I 108 I follow Sippar ms. and Lambert, JSS 12 (1967), 104. (II 48) AHw, 703a. (II 66) *su-ú-lu ha-ah-lu* (WGL, from unpublished text); for *hahlu*, see Adams, JRAS 1979, 4. (II 81) von Soden, TUAT III/1, 124. (II 120) For this oft-debated crux, see B. Landsberger, *Brief eines Bischofs von Esagila an König Asarhaddon*, MKNW NR 28/VI (1965), 72 note 134 (which I follow in essentials); Cooper, JCS 27 (1975), 248-249; Moran, JAOS 103 (1983), 257 note 11; differently Lambert, 46 and 295. (III 3) Moran, JAOS 103 (1983), 259 note 18. (III 6) *[e]-ru-ti*, AHw, 248a. (III 11) CAD M, 2002 reads *ruš-su-gat*, seemingly without basis. I follow von Soden, TUAT III/1, 127. (III 13') Note that the copy shows *ina 'u-ú-a*. (III 27') Bottéro, "Juste Souffrant," 20. (III 48) von Soden, TUAT III/1, 128. (III 14') von Soden, TUAT III/1, 129. (k) Moran, JAOS 103 (1983), 257. (IV B 50') Or, with CAD A/1, 9: "fell at the feet of." (IV C 26') Moran, JAOS 103 (1983), 257 note 5.